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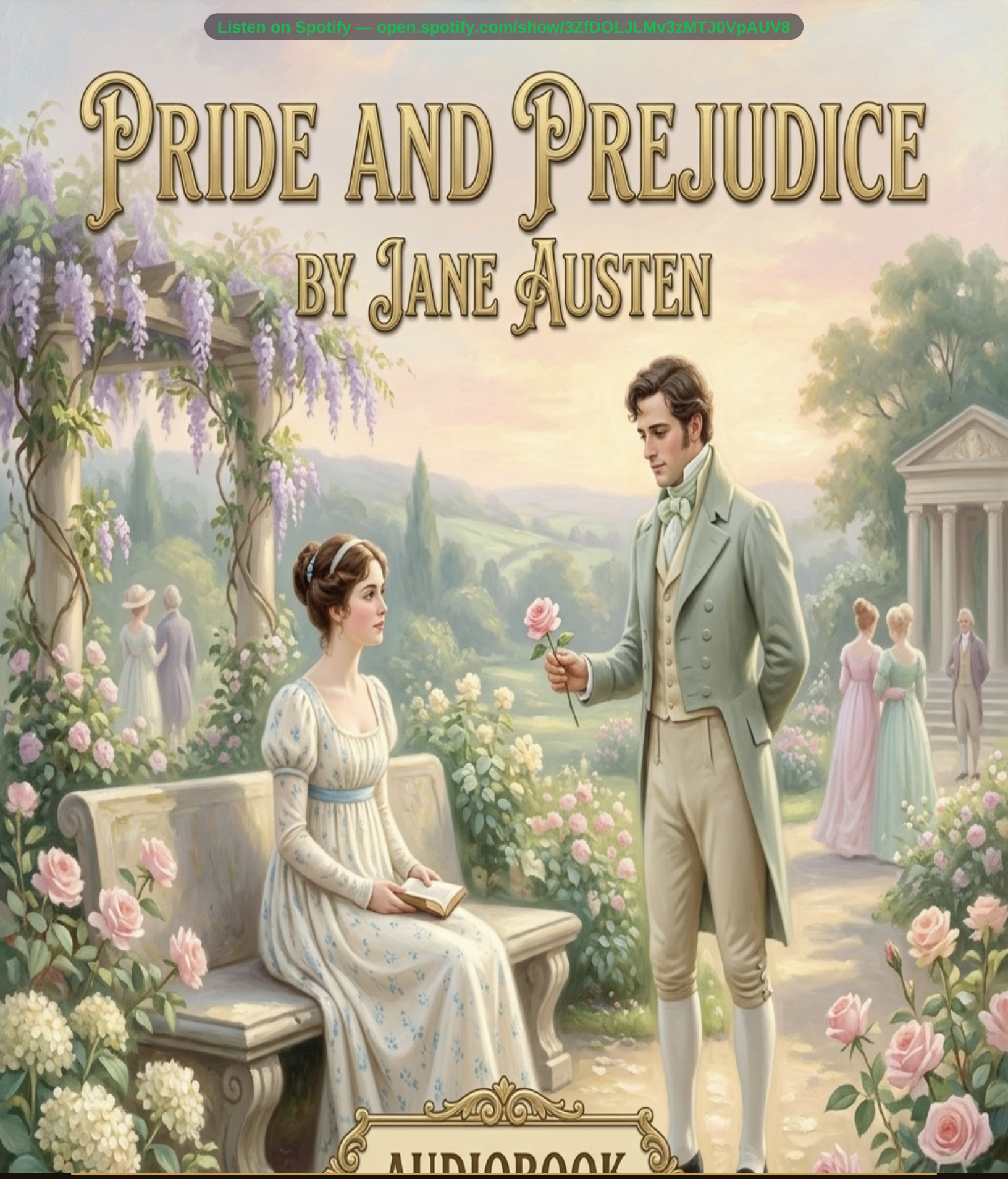
# Pride and Prejudice

## by Jane Austen



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Character Guide • Regency England Primer • The Three Volumes • Edition Notes

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# CHARACTER GUIDE

*The families, allies, and rivals of Pride and Prejudice*

## THE BENNET FAMILY — Longbourn, Hertfordshire

### Mr. Bennet

Father. Witty, bookish, and emotionally withdrawn. He loves Elizabeth best and uses irony to cope with a marriage he long since abandoned emotionally.

### Mrs. Bennet

Mother. Anxious, excitable, and single-mindedly focused on marrying off her five daughters. Her nerves are a running joke; her fears are entirely rational for her era.

### Jane Bennet

Eldest daughter. Gentle, beautiful, and inclined to see the best in everyone — including Mr. Bingley, with whom she falls quietly, deeply in love.

### Elizabeth Bennet

Second daughter and protagonist. Sharp, funny, principled, and fiercely independent. Her misjudgments of Darcy and Wickham drive the central plot.

### Mary Bennet

Third daughter. Studious, moralizing, and socially awkward. Austen uses her sparingly as comic relief.

### Catherine (Kitty) Bennet

Fourth daughter. Giddy and easily led, especially by Lydia.

### Lydia Bennet

Youngest and most reckless. Her elopement with Wickham without promise of marriage threatens to destroy the family's reputation and ruin all her sisters' prospects.

## NETHERFIELD & PEMBERLEY

### Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy

Hero and foil. Wealthy, proud, and initially dismissive of Elizabeth. His letter in Volume II is the novel's turning point — for him and the reader.

### Mr. Charles Bingley

Darcy's amiable friend. Cheerful, open, and immediately smitten with Jane. Easily influenced by Darcy and his sisters, to Jane's cost.

### Miss Caroline Bingley

Bingley's sister. Snobbish and scheming, she pursues Darcy and condescends to the Bennets throughout. Austen's sharpest comic villain.

### Colonel Fitzwilliam

Darcy's cousin. Agreeable and candid — inadvertently reveals to Elizabeth that Darcy interfered in Jane and Bingley's relationship.

### Georgiana Darcy

Darcy's younger sister. Shy, kind, and nearly ruined by Wickham before the novel begins. Her warmth helps Elizabeth revise her view of Darcy.

## KEY SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

### Mr. Wickham

Charming, handsome, and dishonest. His false account of Darcy poisons Elizabeth's judgment. His elopement with Lydia exposes his true character.

### Mr. Collins

Bennet cousin and clergyman. Pompous, obsequious, and oblivious. His proposal to Elizabeth — and her refusal — is one of the novel's great comic set pieces.

### Lady Catherine de Bourgh

Darcy's imperious aunt and Collins's patron. Her attempt to bully Elizabeth into renouncing Darcy instead prompts him to propose again.

### Charlotte Lucas

Elizabeth's pragmatic friend. Her calculated acceptance of Collins's proposal forces Elizabeth to confront her own romantic idealism.

# REGENCY ENGLAND — A PRIMER

*The social world that makes Pride and Prejudice legible*

## The Marriage Imperative

For women of the gentry in early 19th-century England, marriage was not romantic aspiration — it was economic survival. Women could not inherit most property, hold most professions, or live independently without stigma. A 'good match' (meaning a man of sufficient income) was the primary mechanism by which a woman secured her future. Mrs. Bennet's frantic matchmaking, so easy to mock, reflects a genuine and rational terror about her daughters' futures.

## Entail — Why It Matters

The Bennet estate at Longbourn is entailed 'in the male line' — meaning it can only pass to a male heir. Since Mr. Bennet has no sons, the estate will pass to the nearest male relative upon his death: the odious Mr. Collins. This is not a minor plot device. It is the engine of the entire novel. Every daughter's marriage prospects carry the weight of what happens to the family when Mr. Bennet dies.

## Class, Rank & Income

Austen's characters exist in a fine-grained hierarchy. The Bennets are 'gentry' but their income of £2,000 a year is modest. Darcy's £10,000 a year places him near the top of the landed gentry, just below the aristocracy. Bingley's £5,000 comes from trade (considered slightly inferior). These numbers are not background detail — characters know them, quote them, and judge each other by them. £1 in 1813 is roughly £70-80 today.

## Propriety & Reputation

A young woman's reputation was fragile and, once lost, nearly impossible to recover. Lydia's elopement with Wickham without marriage is catastrophic not because it is immoral in the abstract, but because it marks all her sisters as disreputable by association. This is why Darcy's secret intervention to force the marriage is such an extraordinary act of love — and why Elizabeth is so deeply moved when she learns of it.

## The Regency Period

The novel was published in 1813 during the Regency era (1811-1820), when King George III's illness led to his son ruling as Prince Regent. It was a period of Napoleonic Wars abroad and social upheaval at home — though Austen's novels famously exclude the wars almost entirely, focusing instead on the domestic and social world with surgical precision. The militia regiment stationed near Meryton is the novel's only direct nod to the military context of the era.

## Courtship Rules

Young men and women could not meet privately without chaperones. Conversation at balls was strictly observed. A man could not write to a woman he was not engaged to. To refuse a proposal was socially awkward; to propose without any encouragement was presumptuous. Darcy's first proposal — blurting out his feelings while listing reasons why he shouldn't feel them — violates every convention of polite address. Elizabeth's furious refusal is therefore both emotionally satisfying and entirely proper.

# THE THREE VOLUMES — AT A GLANCE

*Austen's original structure and the arc of each volume*

*Pride and Prejudice was first published in three volumes — the standard format for novels of the era, designed to be lent one volume at a time from circulating libraries. Each volume has a distinct emotional arc. Modern editions merge them into chapters 1–61, but the three-part structure remains the skeleton of the novel.*

## VOLUME I • Chapters 1–23 — "First Impressions"

**The Arrival**
Bingley takes Netherfield. Mrs. Bennet begins her campaign. Jane and Bingley meet at the Meryton ball.

**Wickham Appears**
The charming militia officer befriends Elizabeth and poisons her view of Darcy with a fabricated history of grievance.

**Jane's Hope Dashed**
Bingley suddenly quits Netherfield. Caroline Bingley's cold letter signals the family has moved on. Jane is crushed.

**First Prejudice**
Darcy refuses to dance with Elizabeth, calling her 'tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me.' She finds this amusing; the reader finds it revealing.

**Collins Proposes**
Mr. Collins proposes to Elizabeth; she refuses him flat. He pivots immediately to Charlotte Lucas, who accepts.

## VOLUME II • Chapters 24–42 — "Turning Points"

**Hunsford Visit**
Elizabeth visits Charlotte and Collins at Hunsford. Lady Catherine de Bourgh holds court. Darcy is also visiting.

**The Letter**
The pivot of the entire novel. Darcy writes Elizabeth a long letter explaining the truth about Wickham. She reads it, re-reads it, and begins to see herself clearly.

**Pemberley**
Touring Derbyshire, Elizabeth visits Darcy's estate. The housekeeper's warm account reframes everything. Darcy appears — and is changed.

**First Proposal**
Darcy proposes while cataloguing his objections to her family. She refuses with devastating clarity, accusing him of arrogance and cruelty to Wickham.

**Lydia's Commission**
Lydia is allowed to join the regiment at Brighton — a decision Elizabeth opposes. The consequences prove catastrophic.

## VOLUME III • Chapters 43–61 — "Resolution"

**Lydia's Elopement**
Lydia has run off with Wickham without promise of marriage. The family is ruined. Elizabeth tells Darcy — and watches him leave.

**Lady Catherine Fails**
Lady Catherine arrives to demand Elizabeth promise never to marry Darcy. Elizabeth refuses. Lady Catherine reports this to Darcy — who takes it as encouragement.

**The Final Note**
Austen closes with characteristic dry wit on the marriages — who was happy, who was merely comfortable, and who was neither.

**Darcy's Intervention**
Darcy secretly tracked Wickham, paid his debts, and funded the marriage — all to protect Elizabeth's family, with no expectation of credit.

**Second Proposal**
Darcy proposes again, humbly and without conditions. Elizabeth accepts.

# NOTES ON THIS EDITION

### Source Text

This audiobook uses the public domain text of Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen. The novel was first published on 28 January 1813 by T. Egerton of London. The source text was obtained from Project Gutenberg and is in the public domain in the United States.

### Narration

The narration was produced using AI voice synthesis technology. This production is disclosed as AI-narrated on all distribution platforms in compliance with distributor requirements. The narrator pseudonym 'Digital Voice — Lilly' is used to clearly signal the synthetic nature of the audio.

### Supplemental Material

The character guide, Regency primer, and volume guide contained in this PDF were written by Jagali LLC for this edition. They draw on historical scholarship in the public domain and are original editorial work of this edition.

### A Note on the Text

Austen submitted an early version of this novel, then called First Impressions, to publisher Thomas Cadell in 1797. It was rejected unread. She revised it substantially over the following years. The title Pride and Prejudice was chosen partly because the phrase appears three times in Fanny Burney's Cecilia (1782), a novel Austen admired. The novel was published anonymously, credited only to 'the author of Sense and Sensibility.'

*"It is a truth universally acknowledged…" — Opening line, 1813*

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